EDUCATION AT FOUNDATION STAGE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: STATUS, ISSUES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

Submitted by

Jyoti

Registration No. AU21EDPhD0059

Under Supervision of

Dr. Ajay Sharma

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

FUCULTY OF EDUCATION, BASIC SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

ABHILASHI UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation synopsis entitled "EDUCATION AT FOUNDATION STAGE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: STATUS, ISSUES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES" to be submitted for the partial fulfillment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Faculty of Education, Abhilashi University Chail Chowk, Distt Mandi H.P. is my original work and dissertation has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship or fellowship of similar other title(s). It has not been submitted to any other University or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Place: Chailchowk

Date: 17/06/2023

Signature

Jyoti

Forwarded by:

Place: Chailchowk

Date 17/06/2023

Signature

Dr. Ajay Sharma

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a very important role in our life. It differentiates us from the rest of the creatures on earth and helps us to get better ourselves. Education is a basic human need as well as right. It provides us a good career, good life style, a good status in the society and makes us self-independent. Education is a device which provides us knowledge, skill, technique, information, and helps us in knowing our rights and duties toward the family, society as well as the nation. It expands our vision and outlook to see the world.

Formal Education of an individual generally begins when she/ he enters a school through various stages. In India, education was organized under different stages of school education viz. Pre-primary Stage, Primary Stage, Secondary Stage and Higher or Senior Secondary stage under 10+2+3 pattern prior to reception of NEP-2020 which modified and restructured education as Foundation, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary Stage under 5+3+3+4 pattern covering ages from 3-18 years.

FOUNDATION STAGE

The Foundation Stage envisions an integrated approach to Early Childhood Care and Education; for children between ages 3-8. The transformative nature of this phase of education is expected to qualitatively improve the contents and outcomes of education, thereby, impacting the lives of our children towards a better future. All studies and researches related to the early period of development of a child, unambiguously leads to the conclusion that high-quality care and education during this period has a lifetime of positive consequences for all individuals and thus, the nation (NCFFS, 2022, p. 5).

85% of an individual's brain development occurs by the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation in a child's early years to promote sustained and healthy brain development and growth. It is only at about the age of 8 that children begin to adapt to more structured learning. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is thus generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years.

a. Primarily at home: Ages 0-3

Up to 3 years of age, the environment in which most children grow up is in the home with families, while some children do go to crèches. After the age of 3, a large proportion of children spend significant time in institutional settings such as Anganwadis and

preschools. Providing high quality preschool education in an organized setting for children above 3 years of age is one of the key priorities of NEP 2020.

Up to age 3, the home environment is almost the sole provider of adequate nutrition, good health practices, responsive care, safety and protection, and stimulation for early childhood learning i.e., everything that constitutes and forms the basis for ECCE. After the age of 3, these components of nutrition, health, care, safety, and stimulation must continue at home, and must also be ensured in an appropriate and complementary manner in institutional settings such as Anganwadis and preschools.

Institutional settings: Ages 3-8

During the ages of 3 to 8, appropriate and high-quality ECCE provided in institutional environments must be available to all children. In India, where available, this is typically carried out as follows:

i. 3-6 years: Early childhood education programmes in Anganwadis, Balvatikas, or preschools.

ii. 6-8 years: Early primary education programs in school (Grades 1 and 2).

From 3 to 8 years of age, ECCE includes continued attention to health, safety, care, and nutrition; but also, crucially, self-help skills, motor skills, hygiene, the handling of separation anxiety, physical development through movement and exercise, expressing and communicating thoughts and feelings to parents and others, being comfortable around one's peers, sitting for longer periods of time in order to work on and complete a task, ethical development, and forming all-round good habits.

National Curriculum Framework for the Foundation Stage (NCF)

Considering all of the above, NEP 2020 has articulated the age range of 3-8 as the Foundation Stage, in the new 5+3+3+4 system.

This National Curriculum Framework aims to address the Foundation Stage in institutional settings, within the overall context of ECCE While this NCF has an institutional focus, the importance of the home environment cannot be over emphasized - including family, extended family, neighbors, and others in the close community - all of whom have a very significant impact on the child, particularly in this age range. Hence, this NCF will deal with the role of parents and communities in enabling and enhancing the developmental

outcomes that are sought during this stage; it will not, however, deal in detail with aspects of ECCE for ages prior to 3 years, which is entirely outside institutional settings.

IMPORTANCE OF FOUNDATION STAGE EDUCATION

Early childhood care and education is a very important area of study in Human Development. An infant begins to learn from a very early age in addition to learning new things about the world around him/ her .The infant develops an attachment with family members, particularly with the mother and father, as well as with siblings, and grandparents. The young child also begins to recognize other family members and people whom he/ she meets regularly. Further, the child is deeply attached to the mother, the primary care giver. Further, the child is growing very rapidly, learning to walk, pick up things with precision, and manage his or her body in many ways and also developing control over bladder and bowel movements.

In most cases, children are brought up exclusively within a family for the first few years, in some instances, where the mother is working outside the home, there may be a need for substitute provisions for the care of the child**.** In recent times, however, there has been an increasing need for the provision of institutional child care.The creche or family care is primarily seen as substitute for the mother/primary caregiver. However, these may not be seen as an essential experience for the enrichment of a child's learning and development.

These early years are extremely important for a child to learn new things, explore the environment and discover the world around him or her.Once the child learns to walk and run, manipulate things and speak, s/he becomes capable of actively engaging with the environment. It is in interaction with people and materials around them that children at this age gather all the information. Vocabulary in the mother tongue is growing rapidly at this time, as is the child's understanding of nature like sand, water, flowers, birds, machines and other materials. They are curious to learn more and are often heard asking adults when they see something, "Why is this so?".Thus, satisfying a child's curiosity by providing him/her optimal learning environment without over burdening the child to do more than what s/he is capable of is an essential consideration at this age. If we force a child to sit in one place and learn like in a formal school meant for older children, the curiosity will diminish, and a child will feel anxious and insecure.It is thus very important to understand that the best learning environment for a child at this age is one that is safe, secure, loving, with a

variety of people and play materials (toys or natural), and the presence of a caring adult, whether it is the mother, grandparent, or a preschool teacher, or a sibling.

It does not mean that children who do not go to nursery school are not learning, Absolutely not! All children learn, naturally. Preschool experiences help to enhance the child's exposure to other adults and other environments and materials; and more importantly, to prepare the young child for schooling. Pre school education in a program which is child- centered and informal, provides the child with a good learning environment that complements the advantages of a good learning environment at home. Also , if in situations where the home environment may be lacking in some way or the other, the preschool can be an important factor in assisting the child's growth and development outside the home.

Early childhood care and education is a very important area of study in Human Development. An infant begins to learn from a very early age in addition to learning new things about the world around him/ her. The active connections to the brain are made by the experiences that a child draws from his/her environment. Hence the environment of every child should be enriched with powerful experiences to lay a stronger foundation and thereby fostering the holistic lifelong development.

SURVEY OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Sarane Spence Boocock (1995) conducted a study on the Early childhood programs in other nations: Goals and outcomes. The article summarizes conclusions that are supported by research in various countries, indicating that participation in preschool promotes cognitive development and school success, although the specificity pe of program attended matters little. The author draws insights from the experience of other nations concerning such issues as defining quality, the effectiveness of early childhood programs in redressing social and economic inequities ,and understanding how research can influence policy.

Patnaik Jyotsana (1996) conducted a study on the Early childhood education in India: History, trends, issues, and achievements. Objectives of the Study was to provide high quality early childhood education programs; to preserve indigenous practices such as multi lingualily, family/community involvement, participation of older children as caretakers of their younger siblings; and to provide early childhood education to all children despite serious financial constraints. This article presents a brief overview of the traditional child

caring practices in India, chronicles government initiatives in early childhood education, describes the range of programs available in India, and identifies goals that will shape the future of early childhood programs in India.

Kaul Venita and Sankar Deepa (2009) conducted a study on Early childhood care and education in India .The World Education Forum in Dakar ,Senegal approved a comprehensive vision of Education for All (EFA) to be achieved by 2015 based on the six goals. The six goals relate to the areas of early childhood care and education ,universalizing primary education, gender, youth and adolescents, adult education and quality of education. The main focus is on‘ reaching the unreached ’for ensuring complete coverage of education.

Nath Bhanu (2009) conducted study on Role of ICDS programme in early childhood care and education of tribal children an analytical study. The finding of the study was that Majority (83%) of the community representatives reported that the\ consulted the above mentioned aspects at the initial stages of the planning and rarely discussed the aspects related to implementation and monitoring of the programme. The study again stated that all the teacher encouraged the village women to take advice from the AWW in child care practices and the AWWs discussed the problems faced by her with them. All the community members, beneficiaries (women) in the study admitted that ICDS with its package of services is helpful in all round development of children of primary education, drop-out reduction in primary school to some extent. Particularly, it helps in increasing aw areness o f m others regarding importance o f early childhood period and related education.

Choudhary (2012) conducted study on the Policies and Programmes on ECCE in India: An Evaluation. Main focus is on reaching the Unreached for ensuring complete coverage of education. Indian Constitution directs the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. This goal has been pursued by India for nearly six decades through different programmes. The last two decades have witnessed significant improvements in children's participation in schooling.The present paper focuses andanalyses various policies programmeson ECCE in India and also tries to evaluate these.

Haque (2013) conducted study on Universal Pre-Primary Education: A Comparative Study. Major findings of the study were: 1. Establishment of a national coordination committee under the

auspices of MOPME, including in it members from all the important stakeholders.2. Organizing coordination bodies at the district level .3. For expansion and improvement of preprimary education strategies should be flexible.4. Government should ensure political stability in the country.

Singh (2014) Conducted a study on Pre-school Education and supplementary nutrition programme of ICDS for children in Punjab .The results revealed that a majority 60% of AWWs faced different problems in organizing pre-school education activities and about 63.33% of the AWWs did not receive help from the Supervisor at all for organizing pre-school education activities at AWCs.It was found that only half Anganwadi workers were getting regular SN ration in time.

Chandra et. al. (2017) conducted a study on the Quality early childhood care and education in India: Initiatives, practice, challenges and enablers. finding of the study was that country has missed the target of ensuring quality in ECCE. However, recent studies give evidence of tremendous progress towards quality reforms. Of course ,the rears low achievement ,but also improvement in others which shows that ensuring quality is an attainable target. This paper in tends tode scribe initiatives of the Government of India, assess the ground realities, identify major challenges in quality reform in ECCE.

NCERT (2018) conducted study of strategies Adopted by Teacher for Transforming Training Inputs into Classroom processes at primary level. Findings of the study was that teachers responded they had made efforts for the improvement of learning levels of the learners. Majority of them responded for incorporation of activities based teaching but could not specify the kind of activities. Some of them responded for adoption of child centric teaching' and some of them responded for efforts for increasing pupil participation .

Ghosh (2019) conducted a study on the Inequalities in demand and access to early childhood education in India. This study investigates the nature off affecting demand and access to preschool and how parental decisions maybe influenced by parents education and other socio-economic factors social status, and awareness of the value of preschool attendance. A key factor affecting preschool non-attendance was found to bellower levels of parent education. This explained the largest variation in the data. It is important to increase parental awareness on the value of preschool,

as well as to increase the availability of early childhood education in rural, as well as in urban districts, in India.

Manhas (2020) conducted a study on Early Childhood & Education In The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Finding of the study was the functional realities are different, and most of the E CCE programmes currently on offered on have suitable programmes for the young child. The void created by a lack of curriculum structure has resulted in either a minima list programme or a down ward extension of the primary-stage curriculum over burdening the child, which can have an negative effect on the learning ability of the child.

Alcott et. al. (2020) conducted a study on the One step forward, two steps back: Transitions between home, pre-primary and primary education in rural India. Results indicate that children's participation trajectories in the early years (age four to eight) do not reflect the age or grade norms specified by national educational policies .The authors argue that the set trajectories reflect both poor implementation of national norms as well as an inadequate understanding among both parents and service providers of how best to support young children's cognitive development.

Choudhury (2021) conducted study on Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) of Govt and Non Govt with Reference to Quality and Effective Models. findings of the study was 1. That how well the early childhood care and education do not matter if sufficient attention is not given for proper execution.2. Most of the govt. run pre-schools are managed by untrained matriculate even under matriculate candidates.3. However in private schools there well qualified.4.The attitude of parents in govt, run school is different; they focus more on the food items but less importance on sanitation and care.5. Parents of children in private ECCE are more careful about learning objectives.

Malik et. al. (2021). conducted study on the implementation of National Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Punjab. The findings of the study was to explored a strong association between the in-service ECE teachers' training guidebook and the national ECE Curriculum (2007) Both emphasized upon holistic development of Children, development of Critical thinking in Children, development of diversity recognition of self-identity, responsible Citizens of appropriate learning environment.

From the perusal of above studies, it has been observed that though a number of studies have been conducted in the area of pre-primary education, however a study with special reference to foundation stage in the light of NEP 2020 is the need of the hour. Especially in the state of

Himachal Pradesh, it would be highly useful towards the the implementation of NEP 2020 for all stakeholders.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

EDUCATION AT FOUNDATION STAGE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: STATUS, ISSUES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

In Himachal Pradesh lack of clear cut policy and implementation plan for pre-primary education and/ or ECCE as envisaged under foundation stage of NEP-2020 is a major challenge for the Government of Himachal Pradesh. Though Himachal Pradesh was the first state to implement NEP-2020 in the year 2021, but nothing considerable and significant has been achieved so far at the Foundation stage. So, it was thought worthwhile to study the challenges and problems for implementation of the same at foundation stage in the light of NEP-2020 and to put forth some concrete suggestions to help planners, administrators and policy makers to implement these in letter and spirit for the smooth implementation of NEP-2020 with special reference to Foundation Stage in Himachal Pradesh.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study will be undertaken keeping in the view the following objectives.

1. To study the status of education at foundation stage in the state of Himachal Pradesh with reference to:
   - Number of Schools
   - Student Enrolment
   - Teacher strength
2. To study the strategies deployed by the state for education at foundation stage in Himachal Pradesh with reference to:
   - Access
   - Infrastructure
   - Teacher preparation
   - Curriculum Transaction
3. To evolve a mechanism for appropriate and effective implementation and recommendation of NEP-2020 special reference to education at foundation stage in Himachal Pradesh.

DELIMITATIONS:

1. The present study will be delimited to one state i.e. Himachal Pradesh.

2. The study will be delimited to the 4 districts of Himachal Pradesh.

3. The study will be delimited to the BRCCs, Teachers and AWWs of Himachal Pradesh.

4.This study will be delimited to foundation stage of Education in Himachal Pradesh.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS:

Foundation Stage

The foundation stage education in the present investigation refers to five years of schooling altogether that is 3 years of Anganwadi and/or pre-school and 2 years in primary school in grades 1-2 both together covering age of children from 3-8 years.

Status

Status is the position or rank occupied by an individual in a social system on the basis of education,profession, and someone and something when compared to other. At present the status of Foundation Education remains highly unregulated, scattered, and unfocused, with a lot of potential for improvement. lack of structured curriculum, unskilled teachers, and unclear learning goals. The majority of government schools in India start from class 1, proving that early childhood education is not given priority in the educational framework.

Education

Education is very important for everyone. Education is one of the key components for an individual’s success. It has the ability to shape one’s life in the right direction. It facilitates quality learning to people throughout their life. It inculcates knowledge, belief, skills, values and moral habits.

METHODOLOGY:

Method of Research:

In the present study qualitative approach and grounded theory approach will be used.

Sample of the Present Study:

The investigator will make use of multistage sampling technique to realize the objectives of the present investigation.

First of all, 04 districts out of all the 12 districts will be selected randomly for the investigation.

Thereafter, State Level Govt. officials viz. State Project Director, SSA/SMSA; Principal, SCERT; Concerned Incharge Foundation Stage Education, SCERT H.P.; District Level Officials Viz. District Project Officer i.e. DIET, Principal (04) will be selected purposively for the investigation through interviews.

Thereafter, around 30 BRCCs, 150 Teachers and 30 AWWs will be selected using incidental sampling technique.

Tools:

Due to the non-availability of standard tools for the present study, the investigator herself will develop the necessary tools for collecting various type of information.

The following types of tools will be developed by the investigator:

- **Interview schedule(s) -** for State Level Officials; District Level Officials and BRCCs.
- **Questionnaire(s)** –for Teachers and AWWs.
- In addition, wherever necessary **focus group discussion**, if feasible shall be held etc.

Technique:

In addition, the technique of content analysis shall be utilized for analyzing the various State and/or National Level policy documents for education at foundation stage in Himachal Pradesh.

Procedure for treating data

The investigator herself will gather data or information from the subjects of the sample by administering the relevant tools. To analyze the policy documents with regard to education at foundation stage the technique of content analysis shall be utilized. The information gathered through observation schedule, questionnaires and interview schedules will be analyzed by using qualitative analysis technique. The gathered information will further be analyzed using frequencies and percentage analysis.

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